



# 'Bio – Rights' as new paradigm in empowering commons for environmental justice

**Gopichandran R, Dipayan Dey**

South Asian Forum for Environment; Research and Planning Division, India

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## General Note



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'Bio-rights' is based on the principle of Environmental justice that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. Bio-rights are financial mechanism to compensate opportunity costs of local stakeholders and assist commons of global south in reconciling poverty alleviation and sustainable use of natural resources. It could contribute to poverty alleviation by direct payments to compensate for poverty related costs and distribution of payments to communities on the basis of nature conservation.

In this review paper, we highlight and assess the significance of the emerging discourse of 'just sustainability' in global south. We briefly examine the influence of the environmental justice movement upon emerging debates, and the role of the many and various 'home grown' initiatives; of which the concept of commons Bio-rights is significant and we finally examine the linkages which may be made between the environmental justice and sustainability discourses.

The paper describes environmental racism and its underlying causes and then presents a case study of environmental racism in the coastal wetlands of west Bengal in India that are used as sewerage dumping grounds and are systematically sited in poorer areas. The paper also describes a movement of environmental awakening in one area to fight environmental racism and to support isolated, rural and peri-urban fishermen communities in their efforts to recover environmental values. Biorights policy should not only be reactive to environmental 'bads', but should also be proactive in the distribution and achievement of environmental 'goods' like a better livelihood or a sustainable community growth.

Though the parameters of "environmental justice" may seem virtually unlimited, in response to claims that urban neighborhoods bore a disproportionate share of environmental risks, however, perusal of data showed that neither urban neighborhoods nor areas with concentrations of poor people were disproportionately impacted... The strongest correlation in the study turned up as to the

level of political participation: Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that the government is beginning to recognize that environmental justice can play a role in the wider agenda for sustainable development and social exclusion. It is this emerging discourse by NGOs and government based around the linked notions of environmental justice and sustainability.

Environmental justice may be viewed as having two distinct but inter-related dimensions. It is, predominantly at the local and activist level, a vocabulary for political opportunity, mobilization and action. At the same time, at the government level, it is a policy principle, that no public action will disproportionately disadvantage any particular social group. We expand on this below, but it is important to emphasize that a fruitful discussion of environmental justice is crucially dependent upon recognizing this distinction. It is necessary to place the discourse of environmental justice firmly within the framework of sustainability. This paper recognizes the integral connections between justice, reciprocity and equity as a wider question of sustainability and governance.